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*The Excellency of the Gospel, and the
Happinefs of an Interest in it,*

REPRESENTED IN A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT

Haberdashers-Hall, Nov. 4, 1751.

TO THE

CHARITABLE SOCIETY,

FOR PROMOTING

Religious Knowledge among the Poor.

By *T H O M A S G I B B O N S.* A

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of the SOCIETY.

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M A T. xiii. 45, 46.

Again the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Merchant-man, seeking goodly Pearls; who when he had found one Pearl of great Price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

IN this Chapter our Lord unfolds the spiritual Mysteries and Duties of the Gospel in a Variety of Parables. Parables are an antient, condescending, and pleasing Method of Instruction: they are an antient Method, as we learn from the Instances in the old Testament, particularly the Parable of *Jotham**; they are condescending, in that visible and natural Things are made use of as the Shadows of spiritual and heavenly Blessings and Glories; and they are a very pleasing Form of Instruction, as the Mind is first filled and entertained with sensible Images, and from thence, as by gentle Steps, is led into an Acquaintance and Communion with the great Things that relate to God and Christ, the Soul and Eternity. It is no Wonder therefore that Parables should be so frequently used in Holy Writ, and that our Lord Jesus Christ should employ Nature as the Medium through which to convey in the most striking and ami-

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* Judges ix. 8.

able Manner the Light of divine and supernatural Truths. Among the many Parables of our Lord we have a very profitable one in the Passage before us; *Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Merchant-man seeking goodly Pearls; who when he had found one Pearl of great Price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.*

Before I come to the Division of the Text I shall give you a short Paraphrase upon it. *The Kingdom of Heaven*; this may either denote the Season in which the Gospel should be published in the World, or the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ itself, that Gospel which came down from Heaven, that Gospel which shews us the Way thither, or that Gospel which has Heaven, as it were, let down into it, since it treats not upon terrestrial and temporary Trifles, but upon the exceeding great and eternal Weight of Glory reserved in Heaven for the Saints and Faithful in Christ Jesus. In these Senses may we understand the Expression *the Kingdom of Heaven*. *This Kingdom of Heaven*, says our Lord, *is like unto a Merchant-man seeking goodly Pearls*; that is, a Person who lives under the Dispensation of the Gospel and acts suitable to it, or a Person who has a just Idea of and a correspondent Esteem for the Gospel is like a Merchant-man, who makes it his Business to seek and gather up from all Quarters Pearls of high Value, such as are beautiful to the Eye and of real and authentic Worth. *Who, when he had found,*
adds.

adds our Lord, *one Pearl of great Price*; *who*, when he had discovered where an exceeding rich Pearl was to be met with, *he went and sold all that he had and bought it*; he parted with all his Substance that he might raise a Sum sufficient for the Purchase of this Pearl, and counted it a very advantageous Exchange to give up all that he had for the Possession of such an inestimable Prize. So should Persons act to whom the Gospel with all its immense Value of Blessings is revealed; they should not be contented with a Discovery only of its transcendent Excellency, or only entertain their Minds with a Survey of its matchless Beauties, but they should be willing to make a Sacrifice of every thing dear and desirable to them in this World rather than fail of an Interest in those *Riches in Glory* by Christ Jesus *which are better than Rubies, and to which all the Things that can be desired are not to be compared* *.

Having thus explained the Passage I shall pursue the following Method in treating upon it.

I. I shall prove that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a Dispensation of inestimable Worth. And,

II. I shall show that we should prefer an Interest in it above all Things.

I. I shall prove that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a Dispensation of inestimable Worth.

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It is a Pearl of great Price, according to our Text, for which all other Things should be sacrificed. And that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a Dispensation of inestimable Worth will appear from several Considerations. As,

1. The Gospel reveals the great and ever blessed God to us. True it is that the Light of Nature will shew us that there is a God*. *For the invisible Things of him from the Creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the Things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead; so that they are without Excuse, because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their Imaginations, and their foolish Heart was darkened.* You will observe that the Apostle is here speaking of the Heathens, and that he shews how easy it was for them to argue the invisible Things of God, namely his eternal Power and Godhead, from the legible Signatures of them universally extant in the Works of Creation. And let any Man consider the spacious Firmament on high extended in an azure Canopy over our Heads, let him view it as it appears by Day with a Globe of blazing Light performing its unwearied Progress from East to West; or let him behold the Heavens as they are to be seen at Evening decked with the refulgent Orb of the Moon and a Train of radiant Stars poured out over the Face of the whole Hemisphere; or let him contemplate the tremendous

* Rom. i. 20, 21.

mendous Powers of Lightning and Thunder, Whirlwind and Storm, and what vast Ideas of Majesty and Power must fill and solemnize his Mind? Again, let a Person take a Survey of the Earth in its various and beautiful Scenes of Valleys, Meadows, Rivers, Hills, and Forests, together with the numberless Tribes of Beings that inhabit the Ground, and are suitably and abundantly supplied from its continued Productions; and let him then cast his Eye over the vast Abyfs of Waters collected together in the Channels of the Seas, and take into his serious Thoughts their constant Motion, their Stores of Life, their great Usefulness in furnishing the Clouds with Showers, and the inviolable Restraint of their tumultuous Billows by the feeble Bounds of Sand, and will not Might, and Wisdom, and Goodness still more and more enlarge with his enlarging Meditations? But especially let a Person consider his own Structure, how a Clod of Clay has been quickened into Life, how by mysterious Methods it has been made to increase and strengthen, how curiously it is diversified with numberless but all serviceable Parts, fenced and knit together by Bones and Sinews, and clothed with Skin and Flesh; and above all, let a Person seriously reflect that he is possessed of the Powers of Understanding and Will, and can with a Glance of Thought ascend up into Heaven, range the whole Circuit of the Earth, dive into the Abyfs of Hell, investigate Truth through a Labyrinth of Difficulties and a Chain
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of Arguments, and direct and determine his Actions at Pleasure; and what will be the Inference that must infallibly strike the Observer's Mind, but that, as he has never beheld any Being who is capable of creating and upholding these Things, no not so much as a Spire of Grass or a wandering Atom, there must be some wonderful Being whom he has never met Eye to Eye and Face to Face to whom the Universe of Nature owes its Birth, and by whom it is continually sustained? And who is he but that ever adorable and infinitely glorious Being, to whom we give the venerable Name of GOD? But though we may by the Light of Reason arrive at the Knowledge of God, and though we may trace his Perfections in the Courses of Nature and Providence, yet we are indebted for the more full and delightful Discovery of him to the Revelation he has been pleased to give us of himself in his Word. There we learn that from Everlasting to Everlasting he is God; that he is the High and Lofty One who inhabits Eternity; that he is a God of Absolute Holiness, Almighty Power, Unsearchable Wisdom, Inflexible Justice, Immutable Faithfulness, and Infinite Goodness. In this Revelation given to us from Heaven we have the great God set before us in the Fulness of his Perfections, and with all the Beams of his Glory about him. I might add farther, that the Characters he bears, and the Obligations resulting

resulting from them are represented before us in his Word, and we are there assured that he is our Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, Law-giver, and Judge, and are told that we owe him our Homage, Love, and Praise, that Body and Soul—and all that we are and have are his Right, are at his Disposal, and should be devoted to him, and employed for his Service*. *Of him, and through him, and to him are all Things ; to whom be Glory for ever.* But especially are we taught from Scripture to entertain the most exalted and adoring Sentiments of the divine *Justice* and *Goodness* ; Attributes that belong to the moral Government of God, and with which his reasonable Creatures have a supreme Concern. How awfully is the divine *Justice* displayed in that the Breaches of the Law of God, the Wrongs done by his rebellious Creatures against himself, shall either be punished with the most terrible Inflictions of Pain and Misery, as in the Case of the Apostate Angels, or shall not be healed without a Satisfaction, and in a Manner that shall spread Majesty and Grandeur upon the Divine Government, and leave an everlasting Memorial that it is no light Matter to overturn the equitable Constitution established between the great God and the Subjects of his Dominion ? And as to the divine *Goodness*, where can it appear so amiable and illustrious as in the Gospel of Christ ? where we are told that God receives and pardons Sinners of the deepest

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Pollution and most aggravated Guilt through his Son Jesus Christ, whom he has anointed and given as our Saviour and Mediator, whom he upheld in his arduous Work of Redemption, and from whose Hands he accepted his incomparable Sacrifice and transferred the Virtues and Blessings of it to the Children of Men, who were by their Sins outlawed from Heaven and doomed to remediless and eternal Perdition. But I am trespassing in some Degree upon my next Particular ; I proceed,

2. To shew that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a Dispensation of inestimable Worth as it reveals to us a Mediator and Saviour. All reasonable Creatures must be under a Law to God ; a Law (for else it would rather be a Rule than a Law) that has Promises to reward Obedience, and Threatnings to punish Transgression. When this Law is broken the Offender is exposed to the Threatnings, and can have no Assurance, as far as I can see, that God will avert the Curse and all the Destruction involved in it without a Revelation from God himself. A Malefactor who is legally condemned cannot be assured that his Prince will forgive him, unless the Prince himself is pleased to signify his Forgiveness. And if a Malefactor in ordinary Cases cannot arrive at a Certainty that the Prince whom he has offended, though he is only a Man like himself, will pardon him till the Prince is pleased to acquaint him with his Pardon, what Ground is there for Assurance

rance that the God of infinite Majesty, the
 Supreme Authority, to whom we owe our-
 selves in the highest Sense and by ten thou-
 sand Obligations, will not execute the Curse
 denounced against the Transgressors of his
 holy and righteous Law till he the offended
 almighty Sovereign is pleased to signify by a
 Revelation from himself that he will forgive
 our Sins? It may be said, "That if we repent,
 " God will forgive us." But consider that
 Repentance is no Expiation: We need
 to be secured against the divine Justice, as
 well as be sensible of and return from our
 own most unrighteous Provocations against
 Heaven. And besides, as an * ingenious Wri-
 ter observes, "What is this Repentance that
 " is supposed to be such an infallible Security
 " of the Divine Forgiveness? Is it a perfect
 " Abhorrence of all Sin and a perfect Re-
 " turn to God and to full Obedience to him
 " for the future? Were it so, though it
 " would not compensate or atone for past
 " Impiety, yet more might be said on the
 " Behalf of it; but since it is an imperfect
 " Repentance it is but an imperfect Duty
 " and raises us but to an imperfect Obe-
 " dience, and so the Repentance itself, and
 " the Obedience it leads us to will both
 " stand in need of Forgiveness." Where
 then shall we find our Assurances that there
 is Reconciliation with God after we have
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* See the Preface to the *Religion of Jesus delineated*, an
 excellent Piece ascribed to the Rev. Mr. John Reynolds.

been found guilty of Sin, and, it may be of innumerable and flagrant Sins? Which Way shall we fly that the impending Storm, a Storm raised from the malignant Vapours of our own wilful Iniquities, and a Storm armed with the Thunders of Almighty Wrath, shall be prevented from breaking upon our Heads? Might we not cry out if we had no other Succours than Nature could afford us in the Perplexity and Anguish of our Souls,
** Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with Burnt Offerings, with Calves of a Year old? Will the Lord be pleased with Thousands of Rams, or with ten Thousands of Rivers of Oil? Shall I give my First-born for my Transgression, the Fruit of my Body for the Sin of my Soul?* Must we not, if we rightly understood our Case, be wavering in Doubts and Darkness if we had not the *Day-Spring from on high to visit us, and the Sun of Righteousness to arise with Healing under his Wings?* In him, in this Messenger of the Father's Will the Lord Jesus Christ, we may find strong Consolation and an immoveable Foundation, upon which without Fear of Disappointment we may place the Weight of our eternal Interests. We are assured *that God is in Christ reconciling the World unto himself not imputing their Trespases unto them †, The Gospel certifies us that Christ is the End of the Law for Righteousness; † that*
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• Micah vi. 6, 7. † 2 Cor. v. 19. † Rom. x. 3.

*we have Redemption through his Blood, the Forgiveness of our Sins * ; that where Sin has abounded, Grace does much more abound ; that as Sin hath reigned unto Death, even so might Grace reign through Righteousness unto eternal Life through Jesus Christ our Lord † ; and that whosoever believes on Christ he shall not perish but have everlasting Life ‡. Behold then, O Sinners, you who are bowed down under the Weight of Guilt, you, who see the Curses of the Law with their inconceivable Stores of Vengeance set in Array against you, you, who dread every Moment lest this Veil of Flesh should drop and let in devouring and everlasting Flames upon you, behold, O Sinners, a Door of Hope and an Ark of Safety set before you in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You have no Room to indulge Despair when Heaven has broke in upon you with such everlasting Consolation and Assurances of Grace. Though your Sins should be numberless as the Sands, and tho' your Trespases may have reached to the Clouds, yet there are Heights, and Depths, Lengths, and Breadths in the Love of God through Jesus Christ prevalent above and beyond them all, and able to cover them with utter and eternal Oblivion. A Sacrifice is provided, a Sacrifice is accepted, and a Sacrifice too that is judged by the Eye of Infinite Holiness and Rectitude sufficient to make Atonement for Sin, and, now O Sinners, you may*
trust

* Eph. i. 7. † Rom. v. 20, 21. ‡ John iii. 16.

trust to this Sacrifice, to Jesus the Lamb of God who was slain for the Sins of the World, and you may assure yourselves that you shall not be ashamed nor confounded World without End. Is not this a Doctrine admirably adapted to our Wants and Woes? Where can this Doctrine so full of Consolation and so essential to it be found in the Volumes of Pagan Theology? *Plato Cicero and Seneca*, though they went far in natural Light, yet never could trace out this wonderful Method of Salvation, so honourable to God and so rich in Mercy and Grace to Man. *God the Just, and yet the Justifier of Sinners* * is a Truth that only shines in the Gospel of Christ, and it may be challenged by it, as one of its principal and distinguishing Glories.

3. The Gospel of Jesus Christ appears to be a Dispensation of inestimable Worth as it reveals to us the Sanctifier, the holy and blessed Spirit. We are not *only in the Bonds of Guilt, but in the Gall of Bitterness*. Not only does the Curse of the Law level its flaming Terrors against us but we are sunk into a most dismal Depravity: our Hearts are deceitful above all Things and desperately wicked, our Ways are crooked and perverse, we are alienated from the Life of God and are Enemies to him by wicked Works. *That which is born, says our Lord, of the Flesh, is Flesh*†; and the *carnal Mind*, says the Apostle, (and may we not reasonably think that he intends the same Thing

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* Rom. iii. 26. † John iii. 6.

our Lord would have us understand by *Flesh?*) is *Enmity against God; it is not subject to his Law, neither indeed can be* *. Let us consider our Condition before we were renewed by divine Grace and shall we not find, at least some if not all of us, the most dreadful Proofs of Neglect of God, Contempt of his Laws, Rebellion against him, and a presumptuous Perseverance in our sinful Courses, notwithstanding we knew that our Ways took hold of Death and Hell? Cannot we remember our Struggles against the Dictates of our own Consciences, though urged it may be with the Strivings of the Spirit of God upon us, and inflamed with the Apprehensions of future Vengeance? Cannot we recollect what Slights both of the Providences and Ordinances of God we were guilty of, how soon the Sparks of Conviction died away without Effect amidst malignant and uncomprehending Darkeness, and how our Desires and Resolutions, that for a Moment seemed to be strong, were overborn and swallowed up by the next Tide of Temptation? Was not this in some Degree or another the Posture of our Spirits before God was pleased to call us by his Grace, and create us anew in Christ Jesus? And since this Change, as we hope has past upon us, is there not much Sin remaining? If the Building of God is begun yet much is wanted for its Perfection. It is disgraced with much of the old Rubbish, and it is stained with the evident Marks of the former

* Rom. viii. 7.

former Impurity. Enough we trust there is, though sometimes we can hardly believe this, to shew that the Work of God has been wrought in our Souls, and that the Beauties of Holiness are copied out upon us, but enough vitious Deformity remains to prove that we are far from being already perfect. We have a Fear of God, but do we never find the Workings of a vain Presumption? We have Faith in Christ, but have we not at some Seasons trembling Doubts and Anxieties? We feel a divine Love shed abroad upon our Hearts, but is not its Stream sometimes low? We have an Hope towards God, but is it not often overcast and almost lost in Despondency? We find Patience under Afflictions, but is it unusual to faint under them, and do we always forbear hard Thoughts of God? We have a Zeal for God and his Glory, but did we never find it checked and clouded? And we experience a divine Joy at some Seasons, but at others perhaps an earthly Trifle shall more elevate us than an Interest in an infinitely great and gracious Saviour? We resolve, we pray, we strive, but Languor and Heaviness oppress and clog our Souls. We pant for Heaven and aspire upwards, and anon we grovel upon the Earth; we hate Sin, but Sin still cleaves to us; we resist Temptation, but sometimes it breaks down our Guard, we are born away by its sudden Violence, and we find it hard to recover our Ground. We feel a strange jarring Mixture. We are like the World in which we live, in a
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kind of Midway State between Heaven and Hell. Sin we cannot bear, the Determination of our Souls is for God and his Glory, and yet our Spirits are damped, disturbed, and defiled with Sin. *When we would do Good Evil is present with us.* And we may mingle our Groans with the Apostle, *I see another Law in my Members warring against the Law of my Mind, and bringing me into Captivity to the Law of Sin which is in my Members. O wretched Man that I am who shall deliver me from the Body of this Death* *? Now since such is our Condition before and after Conversion as has been represented, how rich a Promise of the Gospel is that which assures us of the Gift of the holy Spirit? And that there is such a Promise may be gathered from these, and many such like Passages. *If ye then being evil know how to give good Gifts unto your Children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them who ask him* †. According to his Mercy he saved us by the washing of Regeneration, and the Renewing of the holy Ghost ‡. *For this is the Covenant that I will make with the House of Israel after those Days, saith the Lord; I will put my Laws into their Minds, and write them in their Hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a People* ||. And the Influences of the Spirit are not restrained to the first Implantation of the Life of God in the Soul, but are extended to the Preservation and Progress of it. *And I will pray the*

C Father,

* Romans, vii. 23, 24. † Luke xii. 13. ‡ Titus iii. 5.
 § Heb. viii. 10.

Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. We are said to be kept by the Power of God thro' Faith unto Salvation†. God is said to guide us by his Counsel, as well as afterward to receive us to Glory‖. And another Promise tells us, that God will never leave us nor forsake us§. Say then, O Souls, who feel the Power of Sin captivating and enslaving you, say then, O Souls, who feel the remaining Workings of Sin, whether the Gospel does not set before you an invaluable Blessing when it promises the regenerating and sanctifying Spirit? Do you not feel the Necessity of this Blessing? As bodily Pains and Sickness show the Need of a Physician, do not your spiritual Maladies prove your Want of the Spirit of God as the Healer and Restorer of your Souls? And where can you find this great and essential Blessing promised to you, but in the Gospel of Christ? God is not obliged from any Desert of ours to graft into our Hearts Repentance, Faith, Love, and the rest of the divine Graces. He has been sinned away from our World, and might have forsaken it for ever. He might have maintained awful and unapproachable State, and might have refused to hold Communion with us. But his Tabernacle is come down to Men, and he will in every Deed dwell with them. How precious then should the Gospel be to us, which, as the Charter under the Seal of Heaven, assures us of*

* John xiv. 16. † 1. Pet. i. 5. ‖ Psalm lxxiii. 24. § Heb. xiii. 5.

of the Descent of the Spirit of God in his re-
generating and sanctifying Powers ?

4. The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ appears to be a Dispensation of inestimable Worth as it reveals to us the whole System of our Duties, and binds them upon us by the highest Authority and the tenderest Love. The Gospel reveals to us the whole System of our Duties towards God, ourselves, and our Neighbours. As to God we are commanded *to love him with all our Hearts and Souls, and Minds, and Strength**, and we are to show this Love thus possessing and reigning in us by Homage and Conformity to him, Dependence upon him, Delight in him, and Communion with him. The Gospel also instructs us in the Duties towards ourselves, to be humble and abased, to draw off our Affections from this World, and remove them to a better, to be pure, and temperate, and in all respects to act worthy of our high Birth, being nothing less than the *Offspring of the Father of Spirits*, and the State that lies before us, *being the Heirs according to the Hope of eternal Life*. The Gospel farther represents to us our Duties towards our Neighbours, *that we are to love them as ourselves†*, and that from this Love are to flow in daily Honour to our God and Good to our Fellow-Creatures, Justice, Truth, Munificence, Sympathy, Meekness, Forgiveness of Enemies, and all those Streams of social Blessing, which, if they prevailed amongst us, would turn these

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* Mark xii. 30.

† Mat. xxi i. 39.

Regions of Sin and Misery into a terrestrial Paradise, and the very Image of Heaven. These are the Duties which the Gospel sets before us with Plainness and Perspicuity, and in various Forms of Instruction, such as sententious Precepts, familiar Similitudes, striking Histories, and argumentative Discourses. How can Religion be carried to a greater Height than in these Directions, *that we are to worship God in Spirit and in Truth**, that we are to look upon ourselves *not as our own but God's†*, and that *we are to do to all Men, as we would they should do unto us ‡*? These Duties are bound upon us by divine Authority, and we are charged to practise them in the most solemn Manner; and that, nothing might be wanting to enforce them upon us that can possibly be conceived, Death and Life, the Gulph of Hell, and the Glories of Heaven are set before us to excite us by Fear and Hope, thus kindled to the utmost, to forsake the Paths of Sin, and chuse the Way that leads to Life. And as to those Persons, who, having been sensible of their Violations of the Laws of God, and their utter Inability to save themselves by their Works of Righteousness, have embraced the Propitiation of Jesus Christ, and taken Sanctuary in his Merits, even they are still under the divine Law as a Rule of Life, and without a Conformity to it in the Intention of their Souls, and in a prevailing Degree as to Practice, they are not to conclude that they are

* John iv. 23. † 1 Cor. vi. 19. ‡ Mat. vii. 12. || Rom. vi. 14.

are in a State of Acceptance with God through Jesus Christ, and made meet for the Inheritance among the Saints in Light. And farther, the very Grace of the Gospel is improved in the sacred Writings as the Spring of Obedience, as might be easily shewn from many Passages, but from none more strongly than the Words of the Apostle, *For Sin shall not have Dominion over you, for ye are not under the Law but under Grace**. Sin would have a Dominion over us if we were under the Law as a broken Covenant, for the Law denounces nothing but Curses and Despair against the Sinner, but because we are freed from the Law in this View, (though we are still under it as an immutable Rule of Life) and are brought into a Participation of the justifying and sanctifying Grace of the Gospel, therefore the Dominion of Sin is destroyed, and the Love of God and Christ constrain us to universal and chearful Obedience. I might add, that according to our Proficiency in Holiness and Service for God, we have Reason to expect that superior Degrees of Glory will be conferred in the World to come, and accordingly it is said *that they who are wise shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and they who turn many to Righteousness as the Stars for ever and ever†*. To the same Purpose we find that they *who had ten Talents* and improved them were rewarded *with a Government over ten Cities‡*. And the Apostle speaking

* Rom. vi. 14. † Dan. xii. 3. ‡ Luke xix. 17.

ing of the Resurrection of the Dead says, *that one Star differs from another Star in Glory**. So that though the Capacities and Power by which we attain to an Eminency in Religion come from God, though we are accepted through Christ, and though the Inheritance of Glory is a purchased Possession, yet here is the strongest Encouragement in the Gospel for us not only to be holy and exert ourselves for God, but to aspire to the utmost Heights in Holiness, and consecrate ourselves to the divine Glory with the most ardent Activity, and unwearied Diligence. Upon the whole, the Gospel presents us with the whole Scheme of our Duties. It gives us not our Duties by Fragments, but in an harmonious System. It sets before us our Duties not with any doubtful Dimness, but in full Light. We find our Duties dictated to us not by fallible Men, whose Opinions or Judgments we might dispute or neglect, but by the Inspiration of that God who cannot lie, surrounded with all that Lustre of Evidence which could in Reason be desired, and enforced with that supreme Authority which we ought unquestionably to obey. And that these Duties may not prove like Plants in a dry Ground, the Dews of Grace, the richest and freest Grace, are shed down to nourish the Principles and Fruits of Holiness, and an ever-growing Blessedness is promised as the Incentive to an ever-growing Holiness. Hence then

* 1 Cor. xv. 41.

then does it appear that the Gospel is a Dispensation of inestimable Worth.

5. And lastly, the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ appears to be a Dispensation of inestimable Worth, as it assures us of the future and everlasting Blessedness of our Souls and Bodies. If we search over the *Pagan* Writers we shall find some of them denying the Immortality of the Soul *; while others seemed to believe it, but wandered into much Confusion and Darkness †; but admitting their Discoveries were never so distinct and clear (as it must be owned some of them have spoken in admirable Strains upon

* Nunc age, nativos animantibus, & mortaleis
Esse Animo Animasque leves, ut noscere possis;
Conquisita diu, dulcique reperta Labore,
Digna tuâ pergam disponere Carmina Vitâ.

Lucretius de rerum Naturâ. Lib. 3.

Now then, my lovely Youth, to let thee know
That Souls and Minds are born, and mortal too,
I'll write such Verse as shall appear to be
By curious Labour wrought, and worthy thee.

Creech.

† That must be a strange Immortality, if it may be called an Immortality, which *Marcus Antoninus* describes;

Αἱ εἰς τοὶ ἀέρα μεθισαμεναι ψυχαι, ἐπὶ ποσὸν συμμει-
νασαι μεμβαλλεσι καὶ χεονταί, καὶ ἐξαπλυνταί, εἰς τοὺς τῶν
θλῶν σπερματικὸν λόγον ἀπολαμβάνομεναι, καὶ τῶν τῶν τῶν
χωρᾶν ταῖς προσυνοικίζομεναι παρ᾽ ἑαυτοῖς.

Marc. Ant. lib. 4.

Souls when they are translated into the Air after they have continued there a Time are changed, poured out, and united; being returned into the spermatic Principle of the Universe; and thus they make room for other Souls.

upon this Head †) yet did they not want a full Assurance ||? Or if their Belief of the Immortality of the Soul, and a State of Happiness was never

† Ως επειδαν πτω το φαρμακον υκεσι υμιν παραμεινω, αλλ' οίχησομαι απτων εις μακαρων δη τινας ευδαιμονιας.
Plato in Phæd.

After I have drank the Poison (the Words of *Socrates* just before his Death) I shall be no longer with you, but enter upon the Joys of the Blessed.

Ην δ' απολειψας σωμα ες αιθερ' ελευθερον ελθης
Εσσεις αθανατος θεος αμβροσιος, κη ει δηητος
Pythag. Aur. Car.

But when this mortal Clay thou shalt forsake,
And thy glad Flight to the pure Æther take,
Amongst the Gods exalted thou shalt shine,
Immortal, Incorruptible, Divine.

Rowe:

|| Ea, quæ vis, ut potero, explicabo, nec tamen quasi Pythius Apollo, certa ut sint, & fixa, quæ dixerò: sed ut Homunculus unus è multis, probabilis Conjectura sequens. Ultra enim quò progrediar, quàm ut veri videam similia, non habeo.

Cic. Tusc. Quæst. Lib. 1.

I will explain these things according to your Desire as well as I am able, but not like the *Pythian Oracle*, so that every thing I offer is to be looked upon as certain and infallible, but like a weak Man pursuing Probability with Conjecture. For I can advance no further than the Discovery of the Appearances of Truth.

The Words of *Cicero* in his first *Tusculan Question*, where he treats concerning the Nature and Immortality of the Soul.

Credebam facile Opinionibus magnorum Virorum, Rem gratissimam (animi Immortalitatem) promittentium magis quam probantium.

Senec. Epist. 102.

I readily yielded to the Opinion of great Men promising rather than proving that most acceptable Sentiment, the Immortality of the Soul.

never so firm, yet where was the well grounded and unwavering Satisfaction that they should enjoy this Felicity, and that through eternal Duration? How could they roll away the Mountain of Guilt which must, as far as I can see, unless they built upon groundless Imaginations, obstruct their joyful Views of the future Glory, and only render the Notice of it the more distressing, as they could have no Assurances they should attain it *. *But behold Life and Immortality are brought to Light in the Gospel* ||. In the Gospel we are told that *when the earthly House of this Tabernacle is dissolved we shall have a Building of God, an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens.* † The Saints are represented as being before the Throne of God, and serving him Day and Night in his Temple, while he who sits on the Throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the Sun light on them, nor any Heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the Throne shall feed them, and shall lead them to living Fountains of Water; and God shall

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* Ἀλλὰ γὰρ ἡδὴ ὥρα ἀπινυσι, ἐμοὶ μὲν ἀποθανέμεν ὑμῖν δὲ βιωσόμενοις. οὗτοι γὰρ δὲ ἡμῶν ἐρχοῖται ἐπὶ ἀμείνον ἔργα, ἀδύλον παντὶ πλὴν ἢ τῷ θεῷ.

Plato in Apol. Socratis.

Socrates concludes his Defence of himself before his Judges in these Words, “ Now it is Time for me to go hence to meet my Death, and for you to depart with a Prospect of enjoying Life, which of us shall have the Advantage is unknown to all, but God.”

|| 2 Tim. i. 10. † 2 Cor. v. 1.

*wipe away all Tears from their Eyes**. As for me I shall behold thy Face in Righteousness, I shall be satisfied awaking in thy Likeness†.

The Soul of a Saint, when it leaves this World, returns to its God; it shall behold the King in his Beauty, in the mingled Beauty of his Majesty and Love, and it shall drink no longer of the Brook in the Way, but of the Fulness of Joy in God's Presence, and the everlasting Pleasures at his Right-hand‡.

It shall be enlarged and strengthened to converse with God and Christ, to survey over the Wonders of Providence and Grace, to love, fear, and serve, its God and Saviour, and receive those full and blissful Communications from the Throne of which it had only the small Earnest and faint Glimpses in the present State. All Sin and Sorrow and every Scar and Relict of them shall be forever gone, and he who sits upon the Throne will fulfil his Promise *that he will make all Things new*||. Now is the blessed Day come for the Soul's Perfection, its Perfection in Holiness, and its Perfection in Happiness. The Inhabitant above shall not say I am sick; the Cure begun in Sanctification is completed, and spiritual Health in all the Vigour and Pleasures of it is now bestowed, and shall be enjoyed without Interruption and without End. Nothing but Heaven that gives us the Experience can give us the Notion of this Pleasure. Nor while the Soul is happy, (where, my Friends,

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* Rev. vii. 15, 16, 17. † Psalm xvii. 15. ‡ Psalm xvi. 11.
[Rev. xxi. 5.

can Pagan Divinity shew us this comfortable Truth?) shall the Body be forgotten. The Body is a Part of the Redeemer's Purchase, and, useless and dishonoured as it may now lie like the broken Fragments of some golden Vessel, it is ordained for Glory. It stays a little Time behind the Soul to do Homage to its Original the Dust, but it shall not be the Prey of Death, and the Prisoner of the Grave for ever. It is indeed forsaken by the Soul at present, *but it sleeps in Jesus**, in Union with him as its living Head, and under the Eye of him as its dear Proprietor and Lord. God has given a Promise concerning the Bones of his Saints, a Promise which shall one Day be executed in triumphant Power, and no Dungeons of Darkness nor Bars of Adamant shall resist the Almighty Call. As easily as the Husbandman can take up an Handful of mixed Grain, and separate one Sort from the other, so easily can God distinguish the Particles of his People's Bodies, though reduced to Dust and Atoms, from the general Mass of the World. Christ has risen, and **they** shall rise also, and rise in-Glory, Honour, and Immortality. The intimate Union between Body and Soul shall be restored, both shall be acknowledged by Christ as his Possession, and with joyful Hallelujahs shall they ascend with him to the Heaven of Heavens, and triumph with him in eternal Glory. *Behold I shew you a Mystery we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed*

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* 1 Thess. iv. 14.

*in a Moment, in the twinkling of an Eye, at the last Trump, for the Trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this Corruptible must put on Incorruption, and this Mortal must put on Immortality, then shall be brought to pass the Saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in Victory**. In the same Sort of Language does *Job* speak; for I know that my Redeemer lives, and that he shall stand at the latter Day upon the Earth, (or that he shall at the latter Day arise with Power over the Dust) and though after my Skin Worms destroy this Body yet in my Flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and my Eyes shall behold, and not another; though my Reins be consumed within me†. Thus does it appear that the Gospel is a Dispensation of inestimable Worth as it assures us of the future and everlasting Blessedness of our Souls and Bodies. Having finished the first Head, namely, to prove that the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is a Dispensation of inestimable Worth, I proceed,

II. To shew that we should prefer an Interest in it above all Things. That we should prefer an Interest in the Gospel above all Things is evident from the Conduct of the Merchant in the Parable, of whom it is said that *when he had found one Pearl of great Price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. He was not content with discovering the Pearl,*
and

* 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52, 53, 54. † Job. xix. 25, 26, 27.

and the immense Value of it, but he sacrifices all his Possessions that he might purchase it, and rests not till he has made it his own. In like Manner should we act; we should not be satisfied with a Knowledge of the transcendent Excellency of the Gospel, but we should seek an Interest in it, and prefer such an Interest above all Things. It is a Privilege that we have a Gospel, whose Doctrines are Truth without Uncertainty or Mixture, whose Precepts are Rectitude and Love, and whose Promises are eternal Felicity. God, whose Will distributes the Lots of his Creatures, might have cast you and me upon some *Pagan* Shore where not so much as one Spark of Gospel-Light glimmers amidst the universal Gloom. Or we might have had the Lines of Life meted out among the Followers of *Mahomet*, and in a Dream of Delusion have traced the Footsteps of that impious Impostor to our final Ruin. Or we might have been born among the *Papists*, and might have this Day been cursing the People of God, swallowing a Wafer for our Saviour, bowing the Knee to a senseless Image, invoking the Names of other Mediators besides Jesus, or might have been imbruing our Hands in the Blood of Innocents, and sporting with their Groans and Tortures in the infernal Inquisition. But we have our Part in a Land where the Gospel of *Jesus Christ* is revealed in all its Lustre of Truth, and Riches of Grace. Our Case is better in this Respect than that of the venerable

able Saints of old; they looked down through a long Series of Time to the promised Messiah, whereas we live in the Days after the Coming of our Lord, in which we enjoy the Gospel in its fullest and best Edition. We discern not the Saviour in his first dawning Rays, nor under the Veils of Types and Figures, as the Preludes to his Incarnation, but *with open Face we behold as in a Glass the Glory of the Lord**. But though this outward Revelation, this Discovery of the Pearl of superlative Price, is a great Privilege, especially as it is freely offered to us, and as we are earnestly invited to accept of it, yet the great Blessing of all, and to which the external Revelation only opens the Way, is an Interest in this Gospel. Happy they, to whom God has not only revealed himself, but into whose Hearts his Perfections and Relations have been ingrafted and so deeply wrought that they have brought forth under the Influences of the Spirit, Fear, Repentance, Faith, Love, Resignation, and the rest of the Graces. Happy they, who never lose Sight of God, but, like *Enoch*, walk with him, walk as seeing him who is invisible, and under the united and powerful Sense of his supreme and awful Majesty, and his infinite and everlasting Mercy. Again, are not they happy who not only have heard of Christ and the Way of Salvation by him, but have put their Trust in him, and avouched him as their Lord and their God, relying

* 3 Cor. iii. 18.

lying upon his Merits and Mediation for their Pardon and Title to eternal Life? How refreshing are Waters not only discovered but applied by the thirsty Traveller, and how pleasant are Provisions not only seen but tasted by the hungry Beggar? And such is Jesus Christ to the Soul that by Faith receives him, and feeds upon *his Flesh which is Meat indeed, and drinks of his Blood which is Drink indeed**. Further, are not they happy, who not only have heard of the holy Spirit and his powerful and plentiful Effusions of Grace, but have likewise experienced his Influences enlightening their Darkness, rectifying their Inclinations, enlivening their Dulness, spiritualizing and raising their Desires, and filling them with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory? You have heard of the holy Spirit's wonderful Operations, but where is the Advantage unless you diligently make use of the Means whereby he conveys his Grace, and are made alive to God through Jesus Christ? But if you have thus received the Spirit of God you are like to God, you are *Partakers of the divine Nature*, and are made meet for the eternal Enjoyment of him. You have the Seal of Heaven upon you in Regeneration, and hence you may infer that all the long Train of spiritual Blessings, rising from the Fountains of the divine Love in the Eternity past, flowing through Time, and at last issuing themselves into an Ocean of infinite and everlasting Joy, are your Portion. Again, are not

* John vi. 55.

not they happy who not only have had their Duties set before them in their full Extent, and enforced by supreme Authority and infinite Love, but are also practising their Duties in a Dependance upon divine Grace, running the Ways of God's Commandments with Enlargement of Heart, and shewing a Respect to all the divine Will, so that the Laws of Heaven are transcribed upon their Souls, and exemplified in the Lustres of an holy and heavenly Conduct, under the Influences and to the daily Praise of that rich Grace which has made them accepted in the Beloved? And finally, how happy are they who have an Interest in the future Blessedness revealed in the Gospel? They have Goods laid up for more than many Years, or many Ages; they have Goods laid up for Eternity. They may rejoice in Hope of the Glory of God, and may every Day and Hour they advance in their Voyage over this tempestuous State of Being see themselves coming nearer and nearer to the Port of their Rest, and the Regions of immortal Life and Joy. A little longer Stay below for a few more Trials, a few more Exercises of Grace, and some fresh Additions to the Principles of Holiness in their Souls, and they shall be called Home to receive the End of their Faith, their compleat and everlasting Salvation. And, when Death, no great Matter whether he does it by a gentle Touch or a rougher Violence, shall take off their mortal Coverings, they may say in the joyful Views of

a Resurrection to eternal Life, O *Death where is thy Sting?* O *Grave where is thy Victory?* The *Sting of Death is Sin, and the Strength of Sin is the Law.* But Thanks be to God who gives us the *Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ**. And now let us pause a Moment, and in the Recollection of what has been said ask ourselves whether an Interest in the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not to be preferred above all Things? What is there in the World below, that vain, vexatious, tumultuous, uncertain World, that can stand in Competition with it? Here are Blessings suitable and substantial, elevated and satisfying, large as the Wants, and sublime as the Wishes of the Soul. Here are Blessings intermingled with no Sin and no Sorrow, but full of Joy without any bitter Tincture, and *Wines from the Lees well refined* without a Dreg of Pollution. Here are Blessings that will sweeten Prosperity, scatter the Gloom of Affliction, strip Death of his Terrors, and turn his dark Valley into the Path of Life and the Confines of Glory. Here are Blessings that will live when the Root of every earthly and sensitive Enjoyment shall go up as Rottenness and its Blossom as the Dust, and when Time and Nature shall be no more. Pardon, Sanctification, Peace of Conscience, eternal Life, what Words are sufficient to describe the Value of these Blessings, and what is there throughout the whole Creation that can be mentioned in Comparison with them? Wealth,
E Honour,

* 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56, 57.

Honour, sensible Gratifications, what are they when considered with an Interest in the Gospel, and its boundless and everlasting Blessings? The Riches of Glory by Christ cast a contemptible Dimness upon the counterfeit Glitter of worldly Wealth, and the Share of the least Saint in them will one Day appear to be infinitely more precious than the Treasures of the *Indies*. What are the Acclamations of Mortals to the Plaudit of our God, and the Whisper of the Spirit in a Promise to the Soul? One Hours Complacency of this Kind exceeds all the proud Triumphs of *Alexander* and *Cæsar*. And what is the whole Round of sensitive Pleasures to the Light of our Father's Countenance? They are but false Meteors that appear for a little Time, and then vanish away, but this is a steady, vital, lasting Light, that shines more and more to a perfect Day. O then act as the wise Merchant in our Parable, *who when he had found one Pearl of great Price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.*

Having finished the Heads I raised from the Parable, I shall make only one Reflection from what has been said, namely, that if the Gospel is a Dispensation of such inestimable Worth, and if an Interest in it is to be preferred above all Things, then certainly we should endeavour to the utmost of our Power, having first received it with the greatest Readiness Affection and Gratitude ourselves, to propagate the Knowledge and Belief of it among others. Are not others guilty, sinful, mise-

miserable, and yet equally immortal with ourselves? Is there any possible Method of Absolution from Guilt, Renovation of Nature, and an Acceptance with God to eternal Life, but in the Way which the Scripture sets before us? Have we not welcomed the good Tidings, embraced them, and felt the Power and Comfort of them? And do we not from Day to Day live upon the Gospel, and nourish our Hopes of a blessed Immortality from the Promises of that Word of God which lives and abides for ever? How then can we restrain our compassionate and vigorous Endeavours to lead others into an experimental Acquaintance with the same Salvation? Let us point others to the same Fountain at which we have drank and been satisfied, and, having by the *new and living Way* which God has opened before us made our Escape from Darknes, Sin, and Misery into the Purity, Light, and Joy of the Gospel, let us be ever solicitous to direct others into the same Path, that they may be Fellow-Heirs with us of the same Blessedness.

But it may be said, ' How shall we spread
' the Knowledge of Jesus Christ? We are not
' Ministers whose Business it is to preach the
' Word, and we have but little Opportunities
' of religious Converse and Influence
' among Mankind. We should undoubtedly
' be glad to be Instruments of propagating
' the Gospel, but how, in what Manner, can
' we do it? We could wish you would sug-

‘ gest some happy Way, and far be it from
 ‘ us to set so light by the Obligations we are
 ‘ under to God and Christ, by the incompa-
 ‘ rable Excellency of divine Revelation, and
 ‘ the Welfare of precious and immortal Souls,
 ‘ as that we should neglect, nay, should not
 ‘ eagerly embrace every Occasion of spreading
 ‘ the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour.”

I answer, it is my Business this Day to shew
 you such a Way, and I may venture to say it
 is an excellent Way; encourage *the charitable
 Society for promoting religious Knowledge a-
 mong the Poor*. The Design of this Society
 is to distribute Bibles, Testaments, and other
 good Books, which may be judged useful, *gra-
 tis* among the Poor; and particularly to send
 such Books to such Ministers and Gentlemen
 in the Country, as the Society may have
 Reason to believe will faithfully distribute them
 among those who most need, and may
 be most likely to improve them. This is the
 Design of the Society; and is it not a laudable
 Design? Is it not evidently and directly cal-
 culated for promoting the Knowledge of the
 Gospel of Christ, and is not this a most ne-
 cessary Service in this Day of general Decay in
 Religion, and general Depravity of Manners?
 Surely the very Nature and Necessity of such
 a Society are cogent, and I hope they will
 prove effectual Motives to all those who may
 have it in their Power, in Proportion to
 their Abilities, to countenance and support such
 a sacred and beneficial Charity. And here
 perhaps

perhaps I might rest my Cause with Success.

But give me leave to mention a few Particulars which I hope will make an additional Impression upon your Minds, and excite you to a most generous Contribution.

The Society is founded upon a Catholic Plan, and it has the Honour of having several Ministers and Gentlemen of the several Denominations Subscribers to it; our View being, I trust, to promote vital and experimental Religion, a Matter essentially necessary to the Salvation of Souls. And accordingly the Books we distribute, and design to distribute, are such as appear to us adapted to this great Purpose, one of which is perhaps one of the best Books, as a Draught and Directory of the Christian Life, that was ever written, I mean *Scudders's Christian's daily Walk*: there is such Perspicuity and Power, such Knowledge and Spirituality, such a rich Infusion of evangelical Motives and Comforts, and such an ardent Zeal for holy Practice, that I am sure Words, at least my Words, must fail to describe its Worth, and accordingly we find it recommended in the strongest Manner by both these eminent Servants of Jesus Christ Dr. *John Owen*, and Mr. *Richard Baxter*. Further, there is a most delightful Unanimity in the Society, and we seem determined to advance its true Interest, and through this, I trust, as the great End of all, the Glory of God and Christ, with the most cordial Affection towards one another: and it is an Ingredient of no small

small Joy that we have several young Persons among us, who instead of pursuing pernicious and expensive Pleasures had rather in this Manner devote a Part of their Substance to the Service of God, and the Good of Souls. May they prove a lasting Strength and Ornament to the Society, experience much of the truly noble and transcendent Pleasures of Godliness, and be an happy Example to others of the same Age to join us, and do likewise! I would observe farther, that we have had the most grateful Acknowledgments from the Ministers to whom we send the Donations of Books, and they inform us how needful and acceptable such Presents are in the Country. So that we have Reason to think that both Ministers and People will bless us in the Name of the Lord for our Work of Faith and Labour of Love, and that through their Prayers what we distribute to them in sacred Bounty shall be returned upon us in the best of Blessings. Permit me to add, that this Charity is now in its Infancy, for it begun but last *August* was Twelvemonth, and small were its Beginnings, though through the good Hand of our God upon us it is comfortably increased. To give Assistance to such a Charity as this, while there are numerous Places in the Country in Want of these sacred Helps, can never be unseasonable, but this is a Juncture that particularly requires the Aids of your Benevolence as the Society is so lately erected.

Strengthen

Strengthen our Hands and comfort our' Hearts by your liberal Contribution this Day, and let us not have the Affliction to find that our first Attempt in this public Manner is not sufficiently encouraged by you, and so go away under the melancholy Presage that we must be almost left alone in this worthy and useful Undertaking.

But, if what I have said concerning the Charity be too little to prevail upon you let me find an Argument, in the Day, which I think as *Christians* and *Protestants* cannot be resisted. This Day Sixty-three Years ago the PRINCE of ORANGE, afterwards the ILLUSTRIOUS King WILLIAM THE THIRD, was just ready to land on our Shores laden with the Blessings of our *Liberty*, *Property*, and the *Protestant Religion*; which Blessings from his Hands have been transmitted through the following Reigns, and which we, as the Fruits of that blissful Period, enjoy without Restraint or Diminution: O may they run down in an uninterrupted Course to the latest Generations, and be as secure and lasting as they are great and glorious! Present to God therefore, as you have now an Opportunity, a spiritual Sacrifice of Praise for these Mercies, especially as you, by encouraging this Society, may not only pay a Debt of Gratitude to Heaven for your Deliverance from POPERY and ARBITRARY POWER, but may strengthen the Barrier against any future Attempts against us, for the Gospel of Christ grants the freest Liberty to the Consciences of
Men,

Men, and there can be no greater Security against the Errors and Corruption of the CHURCH OF ROME than the Diffusion of Gospel Light, for POPERY loves not the Light, nor comes to the Light, for neither its Creed nor its Works of Superstition and Cruelty are wrought in God. As *Patriots* then if not as *Christians*, or rather let me blend the Arguments and say, as *Patriots* and as *Christians* encourage this Society for promoting Religious Knowledge among the Poor; and do it under the Sense of the wonderful Mercies of the REVOLUTION, without which we might not have had a BIBLE to read, much less a BIBLE to distribute.

The

*The RULES of the Charitable Society for
promoting Religious Knowledge among the
Poor, with a Preface recommending the
Design.*

WHOEVER believes the Bible to be a Revelation from God, and that the Matter it contains is not only highly worthy of that infinitely great and blessed Being to deliver, but of the last Importance both to the temporal and spiritual Interests of Mankind, will not want any Arguments to convince him of the Obligations he is under, first to receive it with the greatest Reverence, Affection, and Gratitude himself, and then to propagate the Knowledge and Belief of it amongst others. And, indeed, who that hath tasted the Sweetness, and felt the salutary Refreshment of the Fountain of Life, but must be willing to convey its living Waters to others, that those who need the same sacred Advantages, may drink of the same Heavenly Streams, be quickened, purified, and comforted by them, and live for ever?

Those who have made any serious Observations upon Mankind, cannot be insensible of the deplorable Ignorance that, even in this Land of Light, is to be found amongst the poorer Sort, especially in the Country, for want of the proper Means of Information and Knowledge; and that the Numbers of those are great, who, notwithstanding the various Assistances, which have, from time to time, been communicated for their Instruction and Improvement, yet very much want, in this Instance, the farther Aids of Christian Piety and Benevolence.

Animated, they trust, in some degree by these Motives, and to remove, as far as they can, these unhappy Disadvantages, which so many of our Poor labour under, several Persons have entered into a Society and Subscription to distribute the sacred Scriptures, and other good Books amongst them, as one of the most effectual Methods, in their Apprehension, under the Blessing of GOD, to bring them acquainted with the Truth as it is in JESUS, and render them Wise to Salvation,

As hereby many necessitous Families, who are unable to purchase any of these Helps themselves, will be kindly supplied with them by the Bounty of others; so, it will not be the least Part of the Blessing, that the rising Generation amongst them will be furnished with such Books, as are best suited to their tender Years: By means of which, it is to be hoped that, under the divine Influence, the Tendencies of corrupt Nature may receive a timely Check, and the powerful Influences of vicious Examples, in these sinful Times, be more effectually guarded against, their future Perversion from the Principles of the Protestant Religion to the Errors and Corruptions of Popery be happily prevented, and their precious Souls be early seasoned with a lasting Tincture of Piety and Virtue. And if such are esteemed, and indeed with good Reason, their generous Benefactors, who kindly assist them in providing Food and Raiment for their Bodies; that Friendship, surely, cannot be less valuable, which furnishes them with the living Bread from Heaven, and provides them with that pure Raiment, which is necessary to cloath their Minds, in order to nourish them up in the divine Life, and secure them the Possession of immortal Blessedness and Glory.

As these Considerations will, without doubt, recommend the Attempt of the Ministers and Gentlemen,
who

who have entered into this Design, to the Approbation of all good Men; so it is to be hoped, especially as it is wholly void of all Party Views, that it will engage many, of every Christian Denomination among us, who truly fear GOD, love the Protestant Religion and Liberties, and wish well to immortal Souls, to countenance, encourage, and promote it.

I. The Design of the Society is, to distribute Bibles, Testaments, and other Books, which may be judged useful, *gratis*, among the Poor; and particularly to send such Books to such Ministers and Gentlemen in the Country, as the Society may have reason to believe will faithfully distribute them among those that most need them, and may be most likely to improve them.

II. That this Charity be carried on by a Quarterly Subscription of the Members, and such other Contributions, as well-disposed Christians may assist the Society with from Time to Time.

III. That every Subscriber be desired to attend the Meetings of the Society, and shall have the liberty, in his turn, to direct the Disposal of as many Books as the Society shall think proper.

IV. That when Books are sent down to any Minister or Gentleman in the Country, it will be expected from him, that he shall send an Account of the Receipt and Disposal of them; and that the Account be delivered to the Secretary, by the Person that recommended him.

V. That no Books be received into, or purchased to be given away by the Society without the *unanimous* Consent of the Members thereof at their Quarterly Meetings.

The

The State of the Society's Account from *August 1750 to Michaelmas 1751*. Since which Time it has received considerable Additions.

By Annual Subscriptions, and other Contributions received	—	£.114 13. 3
To fundry Payments for Bibles, Testaments, and other Books given away	—	100 11 1
To incidental Expences	—	3 1 0
To Money in Hand	—	11 1 2
		£.114 13 3

Those who are willing to encourage this Design, are desired to send their Contributions to either of the Gentlemen undermentioned :

The Reverend Mr. *Chandler*, *Old-Jewry*.

The Reverend Mr. *Stennett*, *Charterhouse-square*.

The Reverend Mr. *Gibbons*, *Nº. 2. Bunhill-row*.

The Reverend Mr. *Thompson*, *Barnaby-street, Southwark*.

Mr. *Benj. Forfitt*, *Leadenhall-street*.

Mr. *Edward Nicklin*, in the *Cloisters, Smithfield*.

Mr. *Thomas Holmes*, *Newgate-street*.

Mr. *John Ward*, *Cornhill*.

F I N I S

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